

CLAIMS

1. A method of aligning items within an electronic document, each item having a relative tab indication, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a. determining the relative tab indication of the first item;
 - 5 b. positioning the first item within the document; and,
 - c. for each further item:
 - i. determining the relative tab indication of the item;
 - 10 ii. positioning the item within the document in accordance with the relative tab indication and the position of each previously positioned item.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein any items with a relative tab indication greater than the tab indication of a previously positioned item are displaced from the previous item in a first direction.
3. A method according to claim 2, wherein an item with no tab indication is displaced
15 from the previous item in the first direction.
4. A method according to claim 2, wherein any items having a relative tab indication less than the relative tab indication of a previously positioned item are displaced from the previous item in a second direction opposite to the first direction.
5. A method according to claim 2, wherein any items having a relative tab indication
20 less than the relative tab indication of the previously positioned item are displaced from the previously positioned item in a third direction perpendicular to the first direction.

6. A method according to claim 2, wherein any items having a relative tab indication equal to or greater than the relative tab indication of previously positioned items are aligned with the previously positioned items in the first direction.
7. A method according to claim 2, wherein each item has a predetermined size, and
5 wherein the method comprises positioning each item so as to ensure that a predetermined distance exists between items in the first direction.
8. A method according to claim 1, wherein each relative tab indication includes at least one of first and second relative tab values, each relative tab value representing the relative tab position of a specific portion of the item.
- 10 9. A method according to claim 8, wherein the first and second relative tab values are start and stop tab values indicating the relative position of the start and end of the item within the document.
10. A method according to claim 1, wherein the items are positioned in the first direction in accordance with the relative tab indication, and wherein the method comprises adjusting
15 the relative positioning of the tab indication values to maintain at least a minimum separation between the items.
11. Apparatus for aligning items within a document, the apparatus including a display for displaying the document; and, a processor, the processor being adapted to:
 - a. determine the relative tab indication of the first item;
 - 20 b. position the first item within the document; and,
 - c. for each further item:
 - i. determine the relative tab indication of the item;

- ii. position the item within the document in accordance with the relative tab indication and the position of each previously positioned item.

12. Apparatus according to claim 11, the apparatus further comprising a store for storing the relative tab indications of each of the items to be positioned, the processor being adapted
5 to operate with the store to obtain the relative tab indications therefrom.

13. Apparatus according to claim 11, the apparatus further comprising an input device, the input device being adapted to cooperate with the processor to allow the user to enter tab indication values for each item to be defined.

14. A computer program product that includes a computer-usable medium having a
10 sequence of instructions which, when executed by a processor, causes the processor to execute a process for aligning items within an electronic document, each item having a relative tab indication, the process comprising:

- a. determining the relative tab indication of the first item;
- b. positioning the first item within the document; and,
- 15 c. for each further item:
 - i. determining the relative tab indication of the item;
 - ii. positioning the item within the document in accordance with the relative tab indication and the position of each previously positioned item.

15. A computer program product according to claim 14, wherein any items with a
20 relative tab indication greater than the tab indication of a previously positioned item are displaced from the previous item in a first direction.

16. A computer program product according to claim 15, wherein an item with no tab

indication is displaced from the previous item in the first direction.

17. A computer program product according to claim 15, wherein any items having a relative tab indication less than the relative tab indication of a previously positioned item are displaced from the previous item in a second direction opposite to the first direction.

5 18. A computer program product according to claim 15, wherein any items having a relative tab indication less than the relative tab indication of the previously positioned item are displaced from the previously positioned item in a third direction perpendicular to the first direction.

19. A computer program product according to claim 15, wherein any items having a
10 relative tab indication equal to or greater than the relative tab indication of previously positioned items are aligned with the previously positioned items in the first direction.

20. A computer program product according to claim 15, wherein the items have a predetermined size, and wherein the process comprises positioning each of the items so as to ensure that a predetermined distance exists between the items in the first direction.

15 21. A computer program product according to claim 14, wherein the items are positioned in the first direction in accordance with the relative tab indication, and wherein the process comprises adjusting the relative positioning of the tab indication values to maintain at least a minimum separation between the items.

22. A computer program product according to claim 14, wherein each relative tab
20 indication includes at least one of first and second relative tab values, each relative tab value representing the relative tab position of a specific portion of the item.

23. A computer program product according to claim 22, wherein the first and second

relative tab values are start and stop tab values indicating the relative position of the start and end of the item within the document.